Lindsay Belair’s SMART Project Reflection

This was my first year on the SMART project and therefore, I decided to make my goal for the year a simple one. I wanted to explore SMART Notebook and find resources on SMART Exchange that would allow me to integrate technology into the curriculum. Prior to beginning this project, I had never used a SMART Board and did not consider myself technologically savvy. Learning how to use SMART Notebook was not as difficult as I had anticipated; however, it was time consuming. In order to achieve my goal, I dedicated a couple of hours each week to exploring SMART Notebook and SMART Exchange. After a couple months, I was more confident in using the programs and technology became part of daily classroom routines. I use the SMART Board for many things including: morning routines, for teaching lessons and during numeracy and literacy centers. I find that having a SMART Board in my classroom helps engage learning because I am always discovering new and exciting ways of teaching my Grade 1 students.

I reflected on my goal in April 2011 and determined that I was successful in learning how to use SMART Notebook and SMART Exchange. I decided to adapt my goal to include searching the World Wide Web for useful internet websites, which would further enhance student learning. Since then, I have found numerous websites containing games that my students enjoy playing. My students have learned to play these interactive and educational games independently during center time as well as in a group on the SMART Board. I have seen improvements in their reading and writing as well as in their Math skills because of these interactive games. It is satisfying to watch my students work hard and to be excited about learning because of a new internet site that I have found for them.

Being a part of the SMART project gave me and my students the opportunity to explore and learn with technology. Having the teacher laptop, data projector and SMART Board in my classroom made it possible to smoothly integrate technology into the curriculum. One example of how the SMART project has benefited my classroom includes, but is not limited to, snack time. Snack time used to be 10 minutes, where the students would eat their snack at their desks and visit while I would tidy up and get ready for the next lesson. With the help of technology, our snack time has evolved into reinforcing concepts that have been previously taught. When we were learning about vowels, I found a vowel song on You Tube that I would play during snack time. Before I knew it, all of my students could tell me the vowels of the alphabet. There is so much information right at our fingertips and I have found it helpful for answering those tough questions. My students ask so many great questions and I don’t always know the answers to them. When this happens they say, “Just Google it Ms. Belair”.

This has been a very successful and rewarding year for me in regard to my journey of exploring technology. I feel that I have come so far in a short period of time but that I have only just scratched the surface of what technology has to offer. Next year, I would like to dig a little deeper into technology by moving from the entry level on the Technology Integration Matrix to higher levels of technology integration. I have recently been following a couple experienced primary teachers on Twitter who are doing amazing things in their classrooms involving technology. These teachers are creating videos, digital stories, and blogging with their students; I would like to try these ideas in my classroom next year. Technology has not only enriched my students’ learning experiences but has also made me a better teacher. The SMART project has given me the opportunity to grow and learn as an educator so I would love to see the project continue in the future.